



LEROY D. BACA, SHERIFF

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July 9, 2013

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**ADVANCE NOTIFICATION OF INTENT TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS FOR A
SOLE SOURCE AGREEMENT WITH CARE AMBULANCE, INCORPORATED TO
PROVIDE EMERGENCY PSYCHIATRIC AMBULANCE SERVICES IN THE
LAKEWOOD SHERIFF'S STATION AREA
(FOURTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT)**

SUBJECT

This letter provides advance notification to your Board that the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Department) intends to enter into negotiations with CARE Ambulance, Incorporated (CARE) to develop a sole source zero-cost Emergency Psychiatric Ambulance Services (EPAS) Agreement as a pilot emergency psychiatric patient transportation improvement project in the Lakewood Sheriff's Station (Station) area, Fourth Supervisorial District.

The EPAS Agreement will be based on and consistent with the competitively-awarded exclusive-area Los Angeles County (County) Agreement that CARE already has through the County's Department of Health Services for Emergency Medical Ambulance Services (EMAS) for the Station area. Under both the existing EMAS Agreement and the proposed EPAS Agreement, services are provided at no cost to the County.

BACKGROUND

In the County, local fire department personnel are generally dispatched when a 911 emergency call appears to be medical in nature. In most jurisdictions, if the patient requires transport to a hospital for evaluation and treatment, County dispatchers send a

A Tradition of Service

private ambulance under an EMAS Agreement managed by Department of Health Services.

However, when a 911 emergency call in that same area appears to be psychiatric in nature (because the person appears to be a danger to others, to self, or gravely disabled as a result of a mental disorder), the 911 emergency call may be routed to local law enforcement since peace officers, unlike fire personnel, have authority to detain such persons and either transport them or arrange for their transport to an evaluation and treatment facility under Section 5150 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code (5150 WIC).

Such persons are often transported handcuffed in the back of law enforcement vehicles designed and equipped to transport people placed under arrest. The Department believes ambulance transport would be a safer and more humane alternative with less potential liability to the County.

TIMELINE

On March 18, 2009, the County Emergency Medical Services Commission (Commission) joined by the County Mental Health Commission advised the Board of Supervisors that, "The transport of a 5150 hold by police vehicle, in most cases, does not serve the best interest of the detainee or the community." The Commission requested the Board convene a study group to determine the most appropriate means of transport.

On February 9, 2010, on a motion by Supervisor Don Knabe, the Board established an executive study group with the goal of improving pre-hospital care and transport of 5150 WIC psychiatric emergency patients.

On August 17, 2012, as a result of the executive study group's work, an interdepartmental executive team with members from the Departments of Mental Health, Health Services, and Sheriff convened to oversee planning and implementation of a project or projects designed to improve pre-hospital care and transport of 5150 WIC psychiatric emergency patients.

OBJECTIVES

The proposed project is structured as a time-limited pilot with the following objectives: 1) provide timely, safe, and clinically appropriate ambulance transport of persons in need of emergency psychiatric services; 2) provide the services within a well-defined and manageable service area; 3) establish evaluation measures at the outset of the pilot; 4) utilize existing resources and infrastructure; and 5) ensure that the objectives are achieved at zero net cost to the County.

The plan to achieve these objectives rests on the following concepts:

1. The improvement in service to emergency psychiatric services patients should be achieved using existing emergency transport infrastructure with no increase in County cost.
2. Substantial benefits and efficiencies will be realized by contracting directly with the competitively chosen exclusive EMAS ambulance provider already in place in the Station area. Among the benefits are an established system of quality oversight and the coordination of psychiatric services with medical emergency ambulance transport.
3. The most efficient path to contracting for the recommended pilot project services is to develop a separate sole source EPAS Agreement with CARE, modeled after and designed to complement the existing EMAS Agreement, rather than by amending the existing Agreement.
4. Implementing the pilot project in a defined and manageable geographic area will enable the County to evaluate and refine the pilot before it is expanded to other areas. The pilot area will then be available as a demonstration and training ground for expansion.

The Station area was chosen for this pilot program because it is the Department's largest station area with 2.5 percent of the County population, and because its demographics approximate those of the County as a whole.

The Department estimates CARE will be called upon to respond to an average of less than one EPAS transport call per day from the Station area. This low initial volume will enable a low-risk and low-impact initial development of this improved patient transport program.

Upon completion of the pilot project, the Department in collaboration with the Departments of Mental Health and Health Services will evaluate the success of the pilot project and determine whether EPAS transport should be continued, as well as expanded to other areas of the County through a competitive solicitation process.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

The projected cost to the County of the proposed sole source Agreement will be zero. The County's development effort is staffed and supported by existing personnel and volunteers, therefore, the total net County cost of the pilot project will also be zero.

SOLE SOURCE JUSTIFICATION

The existing EMAS Agreements were competitively awarded through the Department of Health Services. Through these Agreements ambulance contractors were awarded one or more exclusive service areas and access to County dispatch services in exchange for serving all patients requiring EMAS transport at no cost to the County. The contractors derive income by billing insurance companies and patients at rates not to exceed those established by County ordinance.

CARE is the exclusive EMAS provider in the Station area and, as such, is already subject to rigorous oversight, fully staffed and equipped to provide emergency ambulance services in the area, and will be able to absorb the low anticipated demand for emergency psychiatric ambulance transport services in the pilot area.

The proposed pilot is essential to determine the feasibility and effectiveness of these services, as well as the desirability of implementing EPAS transport Countywide. Since CARE is the exclusive EMAS provider in the Station area, the Department believes it is in the County's best interest to enter into negotiations for a sole source EPAS Agreement with CARE for this pilot project.

The recommended sole source EPAS Agreement will specify that, upon suspension or termination of the EMAS Agreement, the sole source EPAS Agreement will also be automatically suspended or terminated.

CONCLUSION

Pursuant to Board policy, the Department will engage in sole source negotiations with CARE in two weeks unless otherwise instructed by the Board. Should you require additional information, please contact Contracts Manager Angelo Faiella at (323) 526-5183.

Sincerely,



LEROY D. BACA
SHERIFF